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Seminar on Legal and Regulatory Aspects of
Satellite Broadcasting : 21-23 October 1993, New
Delhi : [welcome address]

Menon, Vijay

1993

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/92757>

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Welcome Address

by

Vijay Menon

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SEMINAR ON " THE LEGAL AND REGULATORY ASPECTS OF
SATELLITE BROADCASTING " ,NEW DELHI,21-23 OCT,1993.

Welcome address by VIJAY MENON,Secretary general,the
ASIAN MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE
(AMIC),Singapore.

I am glad to welcome all of you ,on behalf of AMIC,to
this seminar on "The Legal and Regulatory Aspects of Satellite
Broadcasting."

Asia today is a shrinking continent.Despite a land area
of 17 million square miles and a population of almost 3 billion
,and its remarkable ethnic and cultural diversity,the relentless
march of technology is reducing time and distance and raising a
variety of concerns over cultural erosion.

To quote a recent newspaper report,"Asia has joined the
global village .In less than 2 years,satellite television has
transformed the Eastern hemisphere.A torrent of news,sports,music
and soap operas is loosening government control over the media
and spawning spinoff industries ranging from programme guide
publishing to small cable systems.Viewers are changing habits and
once staid advertisers are revamping strategies."

Our seminar thus focuses on a topic of growing concern
to the countries of the region.Today,and over the rest 2 days,we
will examine the phenomenal growth of satellite broadcasting and
how it impacts on the regional regulations ,on national
networks and their audiences.We will review communication
policies,censorship guidelines and advertising codes.We will
discuss the social,cultural and economic implications of
broadcast programming and advertising content,and seek to
formulate guidelines and recommendations.

The Long March satellite which bore Asiasat I into a
geostatic orbit less than 3 years ago ,drastically changed the
Asian broadcasting landscape.Today,as Asian homes become
potential targets for American,Australian,British,French,German,
Japanese and New Zealand transmissions,there is urgent need to
consider how the region can cope with the impact ,current
and potential ,of satellite broadcasting.

At our annual conference in June 1993,the Secretary
General of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union pointed out there
is undoubtedly going to be a surge in the volume of transnational,
transmissions into Asia.New satellites and new technology and in

multiplication of new cable systems, legal and illegal, will make available a vast amount of programme material, largely from transnational sources, to a huge and hungry audience. But, he emphasised, while national broadcasters may feel defensive about these changes, satellites offer them many opportunities as well. How they use these opportunities will depend on the initiative and acumen of the broadcasters concerned.

AMIC's interest in this important subject dates back almost a decade. It was in Indonesia in 1984 that we organised the first of our seminars on satellite communication. The most recent seminar was in February 1993 on "The social and cultural impact of satellite broadcasting in the Asia-Pacific." We have carried out several research studies and have published more than one title on this topic. This seminar provides further evidence of our deep and abiding interest.

Those of you who are unfamiliar with AMIC might be interested to know that we are a non-profit, non-government organization serving the cause of mass communication from our secretariat in Singapore. We are supported by the government of Singapore and the Friederich Ebert Foundation of Germany, and a wide range of national, regional and international agencies.

Above all, we are grateful to the institutions and individuals, such as all of you ladies and gentlemen, who contribute to the success of our seminars through your presence and participation. We are confident that we can look forward to an interesting and informative meeting.

In conclusion, I would like to express our appreciation of the splendid support provided by our local partner organization, the Broadcast Engineering Society (India). I would also like to thank Mr. Murari, Chairman, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, for his encouragement and help, Mr. Brajesh Bhatia of the Fourth Dimension, who has worked as a member of the AMIC team, and Ms Rama Devi who graciously consented not only to deliver the keynote address but also to chair the morning's session. Finally, we must acknowledge the prompt and generous support extended by the Commonwealth Media Development Fund.
